United Nations A/58/559

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 November 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 134
Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Note by the Secretary-General*

1. In its resolution 57/306 of 15 April 2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take a number of actions in response to its consideration of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the investigation into sexual exploitation of refugees by aid workers in West Africa.[1] The present note summarizes the actions taken so far by the Secretary-General.

2. On 9 October 2003, the Secretary-General issued a bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13) entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse".

3. The bulletin defines the term "sexual exploitation" as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term "sexual abuse" means actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. The bulletin applies to all United Nations staff, including staff of separately administered organs and programmes of the United Nations.

4. The bulletin promulgates specific standards that reiterate existing general obligations under the United Nations Staff Regulations. These standards determine that sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal. The bulletin specifies that heads of departments, offices and missions are responsible for supporting and developing systems that maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and for ensuring that all staff are informed of the contents of the bulletin. It lays down the procedures for receiving reports of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and for taking action on reports received. The

* The preparation of the present note could not commence before the issuance of ST/SGB/2003/13.
[1] A/57/465.

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bulletin also requires non-United Nations entities or individuals that enter into cooperative arrangements with the United Nations to abide by its provisions.

5. In a letter dated 22 October 2003 addressed to the Senior Management Group, which comprises heads of departments, funds and programmes, the Secretary-General emphasized the significance he attached to the issues of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and informed the members of the Group that he had instructed the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs to establish a system for implementation of the bulletin in the field. He also informed the members of the Group that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises was currently drawing up model complaint mechanisms and investigative protocols, in response to the specific requests of the General Assembly in its resolution.

6. In a letter dated 21 October 2003, the Under-Secretary-General for Management recalled the provisions of the bulletin and assigned to the Office of Human Resources Management the responsibility for collecting and maintaining information concerning investigations into cases of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and the action taken as a result of such investigations. Heads of departments, offices and programmes are requested to submit information relating to the period 1 January 2003-31 December 2003 to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management before 30 January 2004. The report requested by the General Assembly will be prepared on the basis of that information.

7. In the current year, the Secretariat has received no reports of investigations into allegations of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.